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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
BUREAU OF HOME ECONOMICS
WASHINGTON, D.C.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARING CORRESPONDENCE
IN THE BUREAU OF HOME ECONOMICS

5/6/36

DEC 6 1936

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARING AND HANDLING CORRESPONDENCE AND ORDERS
FOR PUBLICATIONS IN THE BUREAU OF HOME ECONOMICS

A. GENERAL

1. Time limit

As a general rule all letters should be answered within three days of their receipt. In no case should the absence of any member of the office delay action upon correspondence.

"Blue slips" indicating the date on or before which a letter must be answered will be attached to letters before they leave the mail and file room. These slips must be retained on the incoming letter and should accompany the letter when it is sent for signature and mailing. If the letter requires no answer, note on blue slip and return together with incoming letter to file room.

2. Outgoing mail

All outgoing mail will be sent promptly to the mail and file room where it will be vised, the carbons stamped, and the letters inserted in the envelopes.

Outgoing letters received in the mail and file room in sealed envelopes will be opened for checking and returned to the division concerned for another addressed envelope. This does not refer to outgoing stamped envelopes, which will be handled as personal mail.

Outgoing letters should not be mailed outside of the building except in the case of an emergency when they must be mailed the same day and the department post office is closed. A note to this effect should be made on the file copy of the letter.

The mail chute must not be used by unauthorized persons.

All foreign mail, special delivery, air mail, parcel post, etc., should have "Mail Order" slips, Form 19, (in triplicate) attached to the front of the correspondence.

When two or more letters are to be mailed in the same manner, only one set of "Mail Order" slips is necessary. However, the quantity should be noted on the face of the form and the names and addresses typed on the back of the original "Mail Order" slip.

In the space allotted for the Chief's signature, the name of Louise Stanley is to be put down in handwriting, and below it, the initial and last name of the person sending the letter.

3. Foreign mail orders

When publications are to be sent to foreign countries, special forms (Dept. 81 and 81a) must be used. These are made out in triplicate, using one sheet of form 81 and two sheets of form 81a. One copy of form 81a is sent to the file room, and the other carbon and the original are sent, together with a large-sized frank, to Mr. Cleary, Office of Information. The necessary forms and the large franks may be obtained from the Business Office.

4. Material affecting several divisions

Letters originating in one division and affecting the work of another division should be referred to the latter for initialing before the letters are mailed. If the approval of the latter division is not required but the letter contains information with which it should be familiar, a note should be placed on the carbon for proper reference.

5. Messenger service

The messenger will distribute and collect mail within the bureau according to the following schedule:

9:15 A.M.	2:00 P.M.
10:30 A.M.	3:15 P.M.
12:00 Noon	

Collections of incoming mail are made by the messenger from the mail chute every hour on the half hour. At the same time the messenger will send to the department post office all outgoing bureau mail which can be sent through the mail chute.

Rush material should be marked with RUSH slips initialed by Division or Section Chief, and should be placed on top of other material in the outgoing mail boxes. This will expedite its delivery. Any special rush material coming to the mail and file room after 4:00 o'clock which should be mailed the same day should be delivered in person with the request to that effect. These instances should be held to a minimum.

Mail which cannot be sent through the mail chute will be delivered to the department post office three times a day, as follows:

9:00 A.M.
1:00 P.M.
4:00 P.M.

All outgoing mail delivered to the mail and file room later than 4:00 o'clock will be sent to the department post office in the morning delivery.

6. Congressional requests

Letters should be written in response to all congressional requests sent direct to this bureau. Whenever a letter is written to a constituent, a carbon copy, marked "C. C. Hon. -----," should be sent to the congressman. For the method of handling congressional requests involving publications, see Section 6 on page 14.

7. Lists of publications

A list of the publications of the Bureau of Home Economics should be enclosed with letters in cases where there is evidence that the correspondent would be interested in such a list. If a list accompanies a letter, the publications which are being sent should be clearly indicated. For information on the availability of publications, call Miss Parkinson, Information Division, branch 2425.

8. Reference slips

When letters are referred out of the bureau, it should be clearly indicated what action has been taken.

If no reply is made in this bureau, but if some publications have been sent, these should be listed on the letter, together with a notation "sent" and the date. If no reply is made, or the reply is an acknowledgment only, the original letter may be referred out of the bureau. In this case a carbon of the reference slip is the only record that is kept in the files.

If partial reply is made, a carbon of such reply should accompany the reference slip. Unless the inquiry can be quoted on the reference slip, the incoming letter should be copied and the copy sent with the reference slip and the carbon of our reply. The original inquiry must be retained for the bureau files.

Only one carbon is necessary for all reference slips except those for the purchase of publications, in which case two carbons must be made. (See page 14).

All reference slips should be initialed and dated both on the original and the carbon.

The following will illustrate the form to be used in making out reference slips: (The part underlined represents that already printed on the slip.)

(Date and sender's initials)

The attached letter*

Dated May 6, 1936

From Mr. F. F. Holbrook,
511 California Street,
Albany, New York.

Is respectfully referred to

Bureau of Entomology

For attention to request for information on moth control.**

No action taken in this bureau.***

copy of

* This line may be changed to read, "The attached/letter" or "The ~~attached letter~~ request noted below," as the case demands.

** The subject of the material or information desired should be noted here.

*** If reply is made, a carbon should be attached, and this fact noted on the reference slip. In all cases it must be clearly indicated what action has been taken and whether correspondent has or has not been notified of reference.

9. Memoranda

Communications to persons within the department should be in the form of memoranda, prepared on bureau letterhead paper. The following style should be used:

April 3, 1936

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. W. A. TAYLOR,
Chief, Bureau of Plant Industry.

Dear Dr. Taylor:

Sincerely yours,

Louise Stanley,
Chief.

The mimeographed green memorandum form is for intra-bureau use only. For convenience in filing, it is desirable to use a letter size sheet even for short memoranda.

B. PREPARATION OF LETTERS

The Bureau of Home Economics and its personnel are often judged by the character of the letters written. Careful attention should be given to letters, even though they are only routine or form letters. The tone should be cordial and sincere, and the style should be conversational but dignified. Both excessive intimacy and formal stiffness should be avoided. Letters should be brief and businesslike. They should come to the point without unnecessary preliminaries, and superfluous phraseology should be omitted.

The new abridged Style Manual of the Government Printing Office contains rules and regulations which will be found very helpful in the preparation of letters.

1. Margins

Margins should be not less than $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches on each side and at the bottom. Short letters may have wider margins, and if very short may be double-spaced. In general, arrange the letter so that it will look as neat as possible.

2. Address

Use the block form, with each line flush with the margin. If the address occupies only two lines, the lines should be double-spaced; if three or more lines, single-spaced. End punctuation should be used, as shown in the illustration on page 11. Abbreviations should be avoided as much as possible. "Street," "Avenue," names of states, etc., should not be abbreviated. "NW.," "SE.," etc., may be used, however, and in the form given here. "Dr.," "Gen.," "Maj.," "Prof.," "Hon.," and similar titles should be abbreviated as here shown.

3. Salutation

Whenever possible use the form "Dear Mr. Jones." Avoid the use of "my" before "dear," and of "Dear Sir," "Dear Madam," and "Dear Sirs." The term "Gentlemen" may be used when writing to a firm or corporation. When writing to a group of women, the term "Ladies" should be used instead of "Mesdames." Address a woman as "Miss," unless the writer has information that she is married. In this case the husband's initials should be used. For instance, a married woman will sign her Christian name and indicate her husband's initials below her signature. For example,

Mary Moore
(Mrs. E. F. Moore)

The reply should be addressed to "Mrs. E. F. Moore." If the sex of the writer is unknown, use "Mr." Use a colon following the salutation, but do not use a dash after the colon.

Titles such as "Major," "Doctor," "General," "Professor," etc., should be written out in full in the salutation.

4. Body of letter

Paragraphs should be indented ten spaces.

Avoid starting the letter by saying, "I have your letter of October 15." It is obvious that the letter has been received or we should not be answering it. For purposes of record, however, and to facilitate reference and filing, it is desirable to refer incidentally to the date of the letter answered, or to the official key designation which the correspondent asks us to mention in our reply. Avoid trite and meaningless phrases, particularly at the beginning of the letter. Do not use the present participle such as, "Replying to your letter," "Complying with your request." This is a very weak grammatical construction.

Avoid using the following: "Advise" for "inform," "above" as an adjective as "in reference to the above order," "as per," "at hand," "at an early date," "beg," "contents duly noted," "enclosed herewith" (if something is enclosed, it is herewith), "esteemed favor," "has come to hand," "kind favor," "permit me to say," "permit me to inform you," "same" as a pronoun (as "Your request was received and same was given prompt attention"), "thanking you in advance."

Special attention should be paid to sentence structure.

Paragraphs should not be too long. A letter of three short paragraphs looks better than one with one long paragraph, but a paragraph should, of course, not be broken up into parts unless there is reason for it.

Whenever possible hold the letter down to one page. If it is necessary for it to run over to the second page, it should be arranged so that there will be at least two and preferably more lines of the body of the letter on the second page. Paragraphs should be arranged so that one line will not stand on a page by itself.

When publications are mentioned in the body of a letter, the names of the publication series should be written with initial capitals; e. g., Farmers' Bulletin 1674, Circular 205. Titles of publications should be enclosed in quotation marks, and the first word only should be capitalized. In using quotation marks, remember that punctuation marks should be placed inside the quotation marks if they are a part of the matter quoted; otherwise they are placed outside (except final period).

It should be definitely stated whether material is being enclosed, or whether it is being sent under separate cover. The expressions, "through the mailing division," "through the Office of Publications," or "under separate cover," may be used.

If a correspondent asks for information which is not available in this department or which is not related to our work, it is desirable to indicate in your reply where the information might be obtained, rather than to state simply that this department has no data on the subject. Frequently the Price Lists of the Superintendent of Documents have valuable suggestions. It is possible, also, that either the library or the correspondence section can furnish suggestions as to where the desired material might be obtained. Whenever it can be done without involving any appreciable expenditure of time, an effort should be made to help the inquirer reach the right source of the information desired.

5. Date

Outgoing letters should be dated by the stenographers preparing the letters. All letters prepared and collected by 3:15 P. M. should be given the date of that day. Letters prepared after 3:15 P. M. should be given the next day's date.

6. Complimentary close

In the more formal type of letter the ending should be "Very truly yours." Ordinarily, for our official letters, which are generally informal, the ending should be "Sincerely yours," or "Yours sincerely." Begin the complimentary close at about the center of the line.

Five spaces should be left between the complimentary close and the typed signature. The following style should be used:

Sincerely yours,

Louise Stanley,
Chief.

7. Signature

On official letters the name and the official title of the person who is to sign the letter should always be typed below the complimentary close. Correspondence dealing with the subject matter of the various divisions will be prepared by the subject matter specialist concerned, the carbon initialed in ink by the specialist preparing the letter, and the letter signed by the division or section chief or acting division or section chief, as follows:

(a) Economics Division letters to be signed:

Day Monroe,
Chief,
Economics Division.

(b) Textiles and Clothing Division letters to be signed:

Ruth O'Brien,
Chief
Textiles and Clothing Division.

(c) Foods and Nutrition Division letters to be signed by
the Section Chiefs as follows:

Food Composition Section:

Charlotte Chatfield,
In charge,
Food Composition Section.

Food Utilization Section:

Florance B. King,
In charge,
Food Utilization Section.

Nutrition Studies Section:

Hazel E. Munsell,
In charge,
Nutrition Studies Section.

- (d) Household Equipment Division letters to be signed:

Louise Stanley,
Chief.

- (e) Information Division letters to be signed:

Ruth Van Deman,
Chief,
Information Division.

- (f) General letters not relating to the subject matter of any one division, and letters to senators, representatives, and chiefs of bureaus of this and other departments to be signed:

Louise Stanley,
Chief.

- (g) All correspondence pertaining to personnel, appointments, purchases, and all business matters should be prepared for the signature of Mrs. Zens, as follows:

Lennah Curtiss Zens,
Administrative Assistant.

The only exception to the above procedure is in the answering of letters which, because of previously-made personal contacts that it seems wise to continue, have come addressed directly to a subject matter specialist. This, however, does not apply to casual personal contacts and contacts resulting from former routine correspondence, but only to those cases where extensive cooperative work has been carried on and where a change of signature would result in confusion and misunderstanding.

In signing a form letter with the name of another person, do not add your own initials under the signature. In signing a typed letter for another person, sign the name and put your initials on the carbon. A signature followed by another's initials destroys any feeling of personal contact that might otherwise be established.

8. Enclosures

If enclosures (spelled enclosures, not inclosures) are to be included, that fact and the number of pieces enclosed should be indicated near the bottom of the page in the lower left-hand corner, thus: (Enclosures: 3). The list of publications of the Bureau of Home Economics should be considered as an enclosure and so noted.

9. Initials

The initials of the person dictating the letter and those of the stenographer who transcribes it should be placed in capital letters at the left margin of the carbon copy of the letter (but not on the original letter), thus: RCM:DE. Letters for the chief's signature should be initialed in ink on the carbon by the division or section chief.

10. Carbons

One carbon of every official letter or memorandum is required by the general file room for filing purposes. Such carbons should be made on 16 lb. bond, not on tissue.

If it is desired to send one or more carbons of a letter to persons in the bureau, to members of Congress, or to others, the proper number of carbons should be attached to the original letter and all carbons should be plainly marked in the lower left-hand corner:

C. C. to _____. Envelopes necessary for such reference should also be attached to the letter.

A notation of all publications and other material being sent under separate cover or being enclosed should be made on the carbon at the bottom of the page, unless the body of the letter contains statements giving this information.

11. Envelopes

Use envelopes that are large enough to accommodate easily all the material that is being sent. Letters accompanied by bulletins should always be sent in bulletin envelopes. Letters accompanied by bulky mimeographed material should be sent flat in 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 12" envelopes. These should be marked LETTER MAIL to distinguish them from straight printed matter.

All manuscripts, including copy for radio talks, press releases, magazine articles, departmental publications, etc., should be sent flat in 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 12" envelopes and marked LETTER MAIL. If the material consists of only a few sheets, it is well to insert a piece of cardboard in the envelope with it.

For a letter which is not accompanied by bulky material and in which the name and address are written 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ " below the word "Washington" on the letterhead, a window envelope may be used. In all other cases an envelope, properly addressed, should accompany the letter when it is sent to be signed or mailed.

The initials of the stenographer should appear in the lower left-hand corner of all envelopes except window envelopes.

12. Illustration

The following model will illustrate most of the above points.
(The part underlined is to be included only on the carbon.)

May 19, 1936

Mr. F. F. Holbrook,
511 California Street,
Albany, New York.

Dear Mr. Holbrook:*

In response to your letter of May 16, I am sending
you, under separate cover, a copy of Farmers' Bulletin 1450,
"Home baking," etc.

Sincerely yours,

Louise Stanley,
Chief.

(Enclosures: 2)

List of Manufacturers of steam pressure cookers**

List of B. H. E. publ.**

FB 1450; 1471; DL 81**

AB:CFD

* The number of spaces between the address and the salutation should be two, unless a window envelope is used, and then it should be four.

** If the material that is being enclosed or that is being sent under separate cover is mentioned specifically in the letter, this notation is not necessary.

13. Assembling

In assembling letters to be sent for signature or to the mail and file room, the material should be arranged from top to bottom as follows: outgoing letter; envelope with enclosures; bulletin envelope, frank, chain envelope, or other outgoing material connected with letter; file copy; incoming letter; envelope of incoming letter.

All necessary envelopes, chain or franked, must be addressed by the stenographer preparing the letter, except, of course, in cases where window envelopes may be used. For correspondence within the department, chain envelopes and not franked envelopes must be used. A supply of chain envelopes of various sizes may be obtained from the file room.

14. Special letters

Letters written for signature of Secretary or Assistant to Secretary are typed on letterhead paper with the Department of Agriculture seal in the upper left-hand corner.

A supply of the seal paper and the salmon-colored tissue will be kept in the mail and file room.

Address: Place one inch below seal.

Margins: Margins should be not less than $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches on each side and at the bottom.

Carbons: Make one salmon copy and three white copies.

C. SENDING OUT PUBLICATIONS

Since the bureau is greatly restricted in the number of publications allotted for its use, material which may be handled through the Office of Publications should not be sent direct from this bureau except in unusual cases.

In general, no more than ten different publications or ten copies of the same publication should be sent to one individual, but exceptions may be made in cases where it is felt that the publications will be particularly well-utilized. In the case of requests for large quantities, call attention to the 25% reduction on 100 or more copies of bulletins allowed by the Superintendent of Documents.

Extension workers' requests for publications should be referred to Mr. Norman P. Tucker, Extension Service.

In ordering through the Office of Publications, the following procedure should be strictly adhered to:

1. Orders for from 1 to 6* publications

a. Address bulletin envelope.

- b. Type on envelope flap the numbers of the publications desired, using series abbreviations as follows:

Farmers' Bulletin.....	FB
Department Leaflet.....	DL
Yearbook Separate.....	YBS
Miscellaneous Circular.....	MC
Department Circular.....	DC
Miscellaneous Publication.....	MP
Circular.....	Cir
Technical Bulletin.....	TB

For unnumbered publications, such as "Getting the most for your food money", it is necessary to type out the title.

- c. If order is accompanied by letter, clip envelope to outgoing letter and file copy and send to mail and file room. If order is unaccompanied by letter, send envelope to correspondence section, marked "For Office of Publications."

2. Orders for from 7* to 24 publications

a. Address frank.

- b. Type on back of frank the numbers (or titles in the case of unnumbered publications) of the material desired.

- c. If order is accompanied by letter, clip frank to outgoing letter and file copy and send to mail and file room. If order is unaccompanied by letter, send franks to correspondence section, marked "For Office of Publications."

3. Orders for 25 or more publications

- a. Make out Dept. Form 75 for Farmers' Bulletins and Leaflets, and Dept. Form 74 for all other publications, and address a frank to go with each form. Make a carbon (on 16 lb. bond) and send to file room. Be sure to indicate whether correspondent is relief worker, extension agent, or other individual entitled to receive a large number of bulletins.

- b. If order is accompanied by letter, clip to outgoing letter and file copy and send to mail and file room. If order is unaccompanied by letter, send to correspondence section, marked "For Office of Publications."

* This is an arbitrary number, depending upon the bulk of the material. A bulletin envelope will accommodate 6 average-sized farmers' bulletins or 10 leaflets.

THE
JOURNAL
OF
THE
ROYAL
ANTHROPOLOGICAL
INSTITUTE
OF GREAT
BRITAIN
AND IRELAND
VOLUME
LXXV
PART I
1945

4. For large number of requests for same bulletin or same group of bulletins.

When a large number of requests come in for the same bulletin or the same group of bulletins, it is not necessary to list the number on the flap of each envelope or the back of each frank. Make a blanket order on Dept. Form 75 or Dept. Form 74, according to the series in which the bulletins fall, and state the number of envelopes or franks attached and the bulletins to be sent.

5. Orders for purchase of publications

- a. Make out a reference slip in triplicate, following the model given below. (The part underlined represents that already printed on the slips.)

The attached letter* enclosing 25¢ (in coin)**

Dated May 15, 1936.

From Mrs. Doris B. Stone,
Wells, Maine.

Is respectfully referred to
Superintendent of Documents, through
Office of Publications.

For attention to request for the following:

FB 1674.....	5¢
DL 76.....	5¢
TB 105.....	5¢
Chart, 100-calorie portions of a few familiar foods.....	10¢
Total.....	25¢

If free publications are requested in same letter, these may also be listed on reference slips by adding the words "Please send also:" and listing the desired publications.

- b. Send original and 1 carbon of reference slip, with remittance, to correspondence section, marked "For Office of Publications, by special messenger."
- c. Send second carbon to file room.

6. Orders in response to congressional requests

Since the Division of Publications of the Office of Information wishes to keep an exact record of all congressional requests for publications, no publications or orders for publications may be sent direct from this bureau.

*If the letter is not to be referred, use the following form: "The attached letter request stated below and 25¢ in coin"

**Notation should always be made of the form of remittance (stamps, coin, paper money, check, etc.) If in the form of a check made out to the bureau, be sure that it is properly endorsed.

Written requests from congressmen or their constituents which may be complied with merely by sending publications should be referred to Mr. Cleary, Office of Information. A note of acknowledgment somewhat as follows should be sent to the congressman:

"Your letter of, requesting that be sent to Mrs. E. L. Davis, has just been received and is being referred to the Office of Information, since they handle all congressional requests for publications."

The incoming letter from the congressman, a carbon of our reply marked "C. C. Mr. Cleary," and a reference slip should be sent to Mr. Cleary. In such cases, when no letter is written to the constituent and when the letter to the congressman is merely one of acknowledgment, the original incoming letter may be referred and no copy retained for the bureau files. On the carbon of the acknowledgment to the congressman a notation should be made stating that the original letter has been sent to Mr. Cleary.

If the request is such as to require subject matter information, a letter should be written, either to the constituent or the congressman, as the case demands, but no publications should be enclosed in the letter or ordered in the usual way. It may frequently be necessary to make a statement something like the following: "I am asking the Office of Information to send you copies of this material." In such cases Mr. Cleary should be sent a copy of the incoming letter, a carbon of our reply, marked "C. C. Mr. Cleary," and a reference slip on which is noted: "We recommend that copies of the following material be sent and charged to the allotment of" The original incoming letter should be retained for the bureau files.

D. VISE SERVICE

All members of the bureau's stenographic force are asked to keep this memorandum on their desks for reference until they are familiar with it in every detail. If a letter does not conform to the points mentioned it will be returned for correction.

The bureau maintains a vise service and all outgoing mail is carefully read and checked for policy, form, content, and mechanical errors. If an error of any kind appears to have been made, the error will be noted on a correction slip and the correspondence returned to the stenographer or the dictator, as the case demands. Corrections of such errors must be made promptly and the letter returned to the mail and file room. When a corrected letter is returned, it must be accompanied by the correction slip.

If a letter from one division is in conflict with information given by another division, the letter will be referred for comment.

Since the vise service is a definite part of the policy of the bureau, it is necessary that all of those engaged in preparing outgoing correspondence give it their fullest cooperation. This will result in more efficient handling of the correspondence, in fewer publications failing to reach their destinations, and in a better understanding between this bureau and those with whom it comes in contact.

